When Angels Fall From the Sky

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/26911651.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Lecter Series - All Media Types
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham & Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham's Father, Beverly Katz, Abigail Hobbs
Additional Tags:	Character Study, Relationship Study, Someone Help Will Graham, Will Graham Has Nightmares, Manipulative Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal Lecter Being an Asshole, Poor Will Graham, Mans Needs Serious Help, Not From Hannibal, Cannibalistic Thoughts, World Travel, Post-Episode: s03e13 The Wrath of the Lamb, Murder Husbands, It Gets Worse Before It Gets Better, but it does get better, I promise, Angst, Angst and Feels, Angst and Humor, Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter in Cuba, Getting to Know Each Other
Language:	English
Series:	Part 5 of Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter
Stats:	Published: 2020-10-09 Updated: 2020-11-18 Words: 14,795 Chapters: 5/?

When Angels Fall From the Sky

by Ooft

Summary

They have suffered immensely at each other's hands. There has been pain, manipulation and death hanging over them like a plague ever since the day they met.

Despite it all, they have a relationship together, one that cannot be pushed away or swept aside - not when they're on a boat to Cuba together, forced into intimacy while they patch each other's wounds.

Neither of them are sure how to behave now that they both have what they want at their fingertips. Both wonder if they'll let their other half survive this journey. Both are all-too-aware of the fact that there has been a lot left unsaid between them and that this trip will most certainly become the most climactic part of their lives.

They've fallen together. They can only hope they land together as well.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They fell.

That's all Will can remember. He can't remember himself drowning, can't remember the way he was tossed into the sharp rocks, the cold water numbing his skin to the sensation of being stabbed by the sharp spikes, can't remember how one particularly large wave tossed both him and the dead weight in his arms on top of one of the rocks, the only smooth one for miles, managing to knock the air and water from their lungs and give them the horrific gift of life.

He does remember the aftermath, the way he woke up to sickening swaying beneath his back, his whole body screaming in pain with each movement. He'd blinked open his sticky, salt-crusted eyes and tried to look around, only to find warm, comforting darkness with no reprieve. Sleep took him back with soft, caressing, welcoming hands.

Will wakes now for the second time, though the warmth from before feels more like heat, the sickening swaying much less obvious than it was the first time. Everything is still black, but the air stirs around him. Ignoring the searing pain in his back, chest and arm, he reaches out, groping blindly in the darkness, searching for answers that he will be too tried to comprehend.

A groan comes when Will's hand finally finds purchase on something solid. It hits Will's face with a rush of hot air and so he grasps tighter, realising that in his hands is flesh and muscle.

"Ha-bal?" Will manages to rasp, rolling onto his side and choking back a scream when the pain rips through him. "Ha-bal?"

A hand comes to rest on his face, fingers pressed to his cheekbone in the most gentle caress he's ever felt in his life. "We are on a boat to Cuba, dear Will."

Cuba. The word bounces around in his head until it becomes a name, a place. *Cuba, a country. A hot, tropical place. Safe, for a while.*

"Can you sit up?" Hannibal asks.

The idea of sitting up is positively *repulsive,* but Will shifts his hand from grabbing Hannibal and moves it onto the bed, pushing himself up. As he pushes, every bone in his arm protests, cracking and popping beneath the pressure. Deep, shuddering breaths rack painfully through his chest and he focuses on that to take his mind off the sharp, pinprick spikes running in his arm, harsh enough for him to feel dizzy. When he's finally sitting, it's as though he could flop back down and go straight to sleep again, his limbs too heavy and cumbersome to hold up for much longer.

Bright light floods in between his eyelashes and he cries out, a whimpering, pitiful whine drawing from the cavern of his throat and dying on his tongue to slip from his lips as only a whisper. Even behind closed eyelids, the light assaults his vision, yellow and orange dots appearing everywhere he looks. All of it hurts, everything, anything.

Comforting heat comes beneath his chin, contrasting a coolness touching his lips. He parts them without thinking and almost moans when the cool reprieve of fresh water floods his mouth, spilling from the sides of his lips and dribbling down his cheeks. The flooding stops and he remembers to swallow, sighing at the way the water soothes his parched, swollen throat. Another batch of water is tipped in, less this time, and he remembers to swallow, sucking all the moisture down greedily and flicking his tongue in demand for more. It's a slow, painful process as he drinks the water in waves, eyes still shut tightly to block out the harsh light above, his hands reaching up and grabbing onto the glass at his lips, shaking as his fingers grasp it and hold it there.

"Lie down," Hannibal says when Will's finished his water, taking the glass from his shaking hands.

Will opens his eyes again, squinting in the light and ignoring the way his head swims as he lays down on what he now knows is a bed. From his limited, blurry vision, he can see a small room, dominated mostly by the double bed him and Hannibal have been sharing. The air smells of stale sweat, suffocating, humid heat and blood.

Hannibal comes back over to him, bucket and cloth in hand. The bed sinks under Hannibal's weight as he sits beside Will and places the bucket between his long, crossed legs, dipping the cloth into the water and letting it soak for a few moments before he lifts it out again and reaches toward Will's face.

It's dangerous, Will knows, to have Hannibal this close to him, tending to him while he's injured, but they've already gone too far into this relationship for Will to start having fears now. Closing his eyes, he accepts Hannibal's fingers tilting his chin this way and that as he rubs the towel over Will's face. Each swipe of the cloth comes away bloody and red, not even the bucket of water being enough to wash it away as Hannibal dips it and returns for more.

"Would you like to clean your eyes?" Hannibal offers Will the cloth.

It's a peace offering, Will realises very vaguely. His body has been shaking with each stroke of cloth against his skin, his fear poisoning the air around them and making it so very easy for Hannibal to read his reaction. He doesn't think he has the decency or - oh, the *irony* - the empathy to feel sorry for Hannibal, though he can imagine that Hannibal is hurt by Will's distrust of him. *Serves him right.*

Hand trembling, Will takes the cloth from Hannibal's hand and rubs it against his eyes. The pain in his arm has turned to a dull thrum and now he can properly focus on the throbbing in his eyes, his eyelids and lashes sticking together with salt and blood. After a bit of scrubbing, all of the grime comes away and he hands the cloth back to Hannibal, watching as he dips it into the water bucket and reaches to wipe his cheek.

The skin on his cheekbones is tight and aching, though it doesn't feel as open as it did immediately after Francis Dolarhyde had stabbed him. *Hannibal must have stitched it up.* Soothing coolness runs over the cut and Will sighs, tilting his head back and closing his eyes as Hannibal cleans everything away, ridding him of his pains like it's all a simple magic trick, or like it had never even happened in the first place. Will isn't sure which one he finds more believable. *Which one do you prefer?* That's Hannibal's voice in his head, ringing loud and clear like church bells on a Sunday morning, the call for people to rise and come to visit God.

As Hannibal's hands drift down to wipe Will's throat (which Will is aware Hannibal wants to carve open and eat) Will ponders on what a visit to God would be like.

It would be in the small town church back in Louisiana, the one that was smashed down right as he and his father arrived. It was simple, built of wood and brick, the cross at the peak of the roof rusted and bent after many years of service. Will had never been inside it, but it lived in his memory as a place of sturdiness and comfort over elegance. There were no stained-glass panes in the windows, no golden tabernacle behind the altar, no fancy coloured sheets to indicate what season it was.

The church would be entirely empty, not even a priest or nun breathing life into it, the air still and dusty, though warm. Light would stream in through the plain, tall, uncurtained windows and would shine on the altar, where a single lit candle sat to announce the presence of the Holy Spirit in the room. Will would sit at the front pew, not quite at the edge, but only a little ways in, closing his eyes and resting his hands on his knees.

God, in his mind, has a feminine voice. Why, he isn't sure, but he's come to accept it over the years, the same way he's accepted that the Devil's voice sounds like Hannibal's.

God would ask, in His soft, lilting voice, why Will has taken His gift and reduced it to nothing, why he has run from the light of Heaven and instead thrown open the doors of Hell, letting whatever exists in that black void to come crawling out, why he has rejected all sense of Good and Evil and instead has created his own kind of label, an Unknown.

Will wouldn't answer. No one can answer such questions, not even Hannibal, whom Will knows from experience can spin lies like the Devil and twist any truth into any falsity he pleases. No, Will wouldn't answer and would rise, step up to the altar, bow to it and stand with a straight spine as he purses his lips and blows, snuffing the air from the candle and slaughtering the Holy Spirit without so much as a bat of an eyelid. He'd turn, walking down the aisle between the pews and reaching out to the large, wooden doors-

"How is your hearing, Will?" Hannibal asks.

Will tilts his head slightly as he snaps out of his thoughts. "Sorry, what?"

"How is your hearing?" Hannibal asks.

"Pardon?" Will furrows his eyebrows, fighting the urge to smile.

“Your-” Hannibal realises his mistake, lips twitching into a smile and his eyes creasing at the edges. “You’re not too unwell for making jokes, it seems.”

“I can hear. Where are my glasses?” Will looks around the room, noticing a table in the corner with medical supplies sitting on it. A few paintings hang on the wall, small, tasteful things that all match in architectural style, but there is no sight of his glasses.

Hannibal frowns. “Is your vision worse than usual?”

“I don’t think so,” Will says.

“You must tell me if it is,” Hannibal says, slipping the cloth into the bucket of water and standing, putting them away in the corner of the room and turning back to Will, “you were concussed after our fall. Impaired sight is a symptom of damage.”

Will nods. “I lost my glasses in the water.”

“It would appear that way, yes,” Hannibal says.

“It’s alright. I’ll manage without them.” Will rubs his eyes.

“It should only take a few more days for us to arrive in Cuba,” Hannibal says, "then we can see about new glasses."

Despite his verbal reassurances to Hannibal, Will allows himself to feel a bit of relief at the idea he can get a new pair of glasses so soon. He's gone without before, and to say it was an inconvenience is an understatement.

Hannibal spends a few minutes fussing with the medical supplies on the table in the corner and Will lets the crinkling of plastic be the sound he falls asleep to.

He dreams of blood. Torrents of the sticky stuff, spilling and swelling and sealing the world away from him, trapping him in a prison that reeks of some ungodly smell, that sweet fleshy stench competing with the smell of human waste, making Will's head spin.

As he presses his hands to the walls, he's aware it's a dream, knows he can't escape, but tries anyway, punching and pushing, screaming until his throat starts to bleed as well. The moon comes out, he realises, and everything around him turns black, the smell of flesh and waste gone, replaced instead with smells both cold and sharp, hundreds of scents that Will can't place a name on but recognises all the same, some primal part of his brain yearning to reach out to something unknown, to remember the names of the smells and where they come from.

His mouth still leaks blood and soon, his teeth are being wrenched by a force unseen. He watches the teeth flash blindingly white in the moonlight, one, two, three, four, all the way to thirty-two (he'd had some removed as soon as he got the money to worry about dentistry) more blood spilling from his lips, clinging to his jaw and plopping to the ground.

All he can do is stand and watch as more blood drains from him.

His insides seize, guts twisting as though there's a hand in there grabbing at them and tugging them out roughly through his skin. Something wells up in his stomach and rises, up and up into his chest and spurting into his throat, sloshing from his mouth and onto the ground, the constant stream barely audible over the thrumming of blood in his ears, brain pulsing and heart racing.

He sways on his feet, but the ordeal is far from over, something tells him. Nothing is ever this easy, not for him.

His body grows weaker by the second, each muscle collapsing and deflating as the blood is drained. His vision dims and his skin feels numb with pain, ears full of swishing sounds that he doesn't know the cause of and his nose so used to the stench of blood, there's nothing to smell anymore.

Moments pass and somehow he's still standing, but then… he's floating, his legs and waist growing weightless, his arms lifting and hovering in the air. He tilts back slightly, body relaxing, pain gone and muscles non-existent.

The moment disappears all too soon and he's choking on something that won't stop filling him, trying to breathe and only succeeding in letting more of the thick, sticky stuff flood his mouth, throat and lungs, everything constricting and twining in tendrils of pain. The world around him is black, everything dark enough that he isn't sure whether or not his eyes are open anymore. He wants to struggle, to flail his useless arms and legs and escape whatever kind of torturous, blood-filled prison he's trapped in. His body should be screaming in pain, should be trying to fight, but nothing can move and he remains still, muscles dead and uttering barely a whimper.

It doesn't matter. He takes one last, choking mouthful of liquid and all the life in his body dissipates to nothing.

Chapter End Notes

I just think it's important we discuss what Hannibal and Will's relationship is like post-fall. I mean, it's all good-and-well to write one-shots that take place several months/years in the future when they're comfortable together, but what about immediately after all the murderous bullshit and heartbreak?

This story won't have any real, solid plot, it's just a story that studies the way these two interact in my mind over the course of several months, with their relationship developing until we get to the real, nitty-gritty, actually-in-a-relationship-and-in-love type stuff.

To anyone who didn't get the hearing joke: it's just where someone asks about your hearing, so you pretend you can't hear them. It's a horrible dad joke that runs in my family and I get fucking 'Nam flashbacks thinking about it, but for the purpose of having

some humour in this massive pile of angst, Will is going to make dad jokes throughout the entirety of this story, because otherwise I will lose my shit and get really depressed on here.

Anyway, please tell me what you think of this, or (even better) pose your theories to me in the comments and I'll consider them in this story!

Chapter 2

Will spends the next day waking and falling back asleep. Each time he opens his eyes, his head swims, his brain feeling like it's sloshing from side to side, knocking against his skull in time with the rocking of the boat.

Hannibal isn't there whenever Will wakes, so he assumes the other man has taken up navigation outside. Too many questions come to mind when Will thinks of Hannibal, so it seems best if he doesn't try to get up and speak to him just yet. Being even more injured puts him at Hannibal's mercy for longer, something Will is desperately trying to avoid as he plans his next course of action, going through all potential outcomes his running has caused.

There's Molly and Walter back in the U.S., of course, but Will can't go back. The only outcome he can see coming from such a visit is Molly crying, then Jack Crawford coming to arrest him and put him in jail for the next twenty years of his life, possibly longer. That or an insane asylum.

Will doesn't know which he'd prefer.

Waking up for the fourth time today, Will forces himself to bite back all his nausea and sit up. The room is still dark, though when he sits and looks around, he can see a rectangle of light coming from what he presumes is a door frame. It's at that moment, as he's grabbing his head and wincing, that Hannibal decides to come in, the light from the door piercing Will's eyes and making black spots appear in his vision.

Grunting, Will covers his eyes with the palms of his hands, blinking through the pain. Over the pounding of his ears, he's aware that the door is being closed, clicking back into place softly and blocking out all the nasty light.

"My apologies, Will. I wasn't sure whether you'd be awake or not," Hannibal's voice drifts over to him, soothing the rush of blood in his head but managing to make all his hair stand on end, muscles tense and poised, ready for an attack.

Will isn't sure how to respond, the fogginess of his mind not bringing any coherent thoughts to light, so he remains silent, shaking his head and blinking away the orange dots that dance in the corners of his eyes. All of his limbs feel heavy with weariness, hanging from his body as if stuck to the bed, more affected by gravity than usual. *That's probably not a good sign,* he manages to think, though the thought doesn't drift any further from there.

"Will? Can you hear me?" Hannibal asks. His voice echoes through Will's head.

Will swings his head in the direction of Hannibal's voice, the point where it sounds loudest, blinking harshly and rubbing his eyes until they hurt.

"Will?" The world tilts sideways and Will closes his eyes as he falls with it, gasping out a pained breath when he lands on his side, crushing his arm against his ribs and shooting pain through his body in sickening waves.

Warm fingers touch his cheeks, moving to his forehead and sitting for a moment.

“Do you feel cold, Will?” Hannibal asks.

He does, a little. His skin prickles with ice, but his blood feels much too hot, the two mixing like a cocktail inside him.

“Will,” Hannibal says, his voice firm, “I need you to respond to my questions. How are you feeling?”

Will opens his eyes and looks up to see the Wendigo leaning over him, the antlers growing and branching out, reaching down, down, down, scraping at his skin like begging, clawing fingers. It’s black eyes glint in the darkness, pupils glowing white, no lashes visible.

A scalding hot hand is placed on his shoulder and Will startles, jerking away from the Wendigo and rolling away, the world spinning around him.

“Will.” That’s Hannibal.

“Hannibal.” That’s Will.

“Can you hear me?” Hannibal asks.

He can feel his lips moving, can hear sound come out, but whether he gives a coherent answer or not, he can’t tell.

“I’m going to turn on the light,” Hannibal says. The world becomes less tilted and Will can see a vague shape moving through the room. It stops and the world bursts with brightness.

Will screws his eyes shut and lifts and arm over his head, blocking out the light as best as he can. Agony flashes from one side of his face to the other, vibrating through his cheeks, forehead, chin, eyes and nose in waves, rolling around, rising and falling as the blood in his ears does the same. Any remaining energy clinging to him is sapped away, gone as quickly as it came.

“Let me look at you,” Hannibal says, grabbing Will’s arm and moving it away from his face.

Will lays still as fingers drift over his cheek and chin. He opens his eyes slowly, feeling them roll of their own accord before he regains control and focuses on Hannibal, who stares at him with creased eyebrows, a frown twitching the corner of his lips. Will smiles in response.

Humming in thought, Hannibal gets up from the bed and stands at the medical table, rifling through all the boxes and packages. He pulls out one box that Will can’t read *(where the fuck are my glasses?)* and opens it, popping out what looks like two red tablets. Hands steady, he walks over to Will with a glass of water and the pills, slipping them into Will’s outstretched palm.

“You will have to sit up,” Hannibal says, perching on the edge of the bed.

Will forces himself onto an elbow, tries to get up further, then sags, allowing the waves of pain to wash over him without resistance. Hannibal seems satisfied, as he holds the glass of water to Will's lips and helps him take the tablets, making soft cooing noises as Will swallows the medicine. When Will chokes on the second tablet, Hannibal reaches out and rubs his throat.

Without thinking, Will jerks backward, slamming his head into something hard behind him - the wall, his brain tells him - and sends pain shooting through his skull and face.

He was going to choke me.

That's the first thought that reaches Will's brain.

No.

When one of the dogs had to take medication and Will couldn't hide it in their food, he had to put it directly in their mouth and rub their throat to encourage them to swallow. That's what Hannibal was doing.

Hannibal reaches out and touches Will's face. Will wishes he could move away, could sink into the mattress and the duvet, never to surface again, if only it meant he could stop Hannibal from having this much power over him. The walls feel like they're closing in around him, forcing him and Hannibal closer together.

"Will," Hannibal says. It's not a question, he isn't expecting an answer.

"Yeah?" Will answers him anyway. Feigning coherency is the best thing he's got now, even if Hannibal can see right through him.

"How do you feel?" Hannibal asks.

Usually there'd be a tender edge to that question, a loving, caring tone. Will finds that when it comes to Hannibal, there's an urgency instead, a need for his victim to get better so that the cycle of pain and betrayal can be started again. They've hurt each other enough, given and taken more than their fair share of pain in a lifetime, but Hannibal is always greedy for more, pushing Will mercilessly until he breaks under the pressure and gives way to some animal inside him.

Sometimes, Will feels like one of the pigs Hannibal slaughters. One day, Hannibal kills him and consumes him, then the next day, Will is back and ready for more, prepared to be used and abused again; maybe because he's come to enjoy it in some sick, twisted way. He's found comfort in the repetition of blood spilt and betrayal dealt.

He's beginning to wonder how Hannibal will betray him next.

"I'm sore," Will says.

"Slamming your head into the wall may do that," Hannibal says, all humour and smiles. It makes Will's hands twitch with the need to wrap themselves around Hannibal's neck.

“What meds did you give me?” Will asks. *I need my glasses. Have to be able to read the packaging. Colours, maybe? Advil is dark blue, but anything else?*

“Just a few ibuprofens,” Hannibal says, “to relieve the pain.” Will knows there’s a chance that Hannibal’s lying, but there’s no point in starting an argument.

Will nods. “You got a metaphor for that? My shortcomings as a human, getting a headache?”

“The fact that you survived proves how exceptional the human body can be in terms of survival,” Hannibal says instead.

Mustering up energy to respond to that proves fruitless, so Will waits for Hannibal to continue.

“I’m amazed your body kept you from entering a comatose state, actually,” Hannibal says, “you were certainly injured enough to do so. Perhaps your body knows you better than your mind - you and I have much to do, now that you have finally reached your Becoming.”

Becoming. Will isn’t sure what to make of the word anymore. He doesn’t feel like he’s 'Become' anything, but maybe that’s Hannibal’s point: he’s always been a monster. Every decision he’s made in the past has gotten him to this situation, where he’s lying in a bed, entirely at Hannibal’s mercy for what could be the thousandth time in his life and he can’t do a single thing about it. There’s no denouncing his actions, no taking anything back. He has Become the monster that Hannibal always wanted him to be, despite all the doubts that have come along with such a change.

I don’t deserve to have doubts.

Will knows he has chosen this path. He had hundreds of choices, all laid before him and he chose to let Hannibal choose.

“How close are we to Cuba?” Will asks. Coherency is a blessing.

“Only a day or two, I should think,” Hannibal says.

“How injured am I?” The answer will be bad, but it seems like the appropriate thing to ask when he feels this wrecked.

Hannibal folds his hands in his lap and as he rattles off a list of injuries. As he speaks, Will can feel the spikes of pain in the areas mentioned: hot little shots in each of his broken ribs, the minute stings of every cut and laceration on his limbs, the throbbing ache of his swollen cheek and jaw, pushing gently at the corner of his eye and turning his vision there fuzzier than usual.

“What about you?” Will asks.

“Mostly the same,” Hannibal says. It’s cryptic, but Will can infer the addition of the bullet wound and less broken ribs, maybe even none at all.

“I need to get out of bed,” Will says.

Hannibal nods and stands from the bed, turning to offer his hand to Will. “Would you like any help?”

“No,” Will says, pushing himself up into a sitting position, pushing through the pain in his arms, ribs and torso. “Thank you.”

Hannibal is watching as Will shuffles over to the edge of the bed and tentatively stands up, keeping his arms steady on the bed when his legs shake. In the harsh bedroom light, he can see all the ugly cuts on his legs, some of it bandaged with faint traces of blood soaking through, other parts appearing as small punctures in the skin. He traces his fingers over the ragged bits of flesh and feels them flap against his leg, loose and torn. When he stops examining his legs, he looks up to find Hannibal gone, the bedroom door gaping open and leading to a small, sunlit hallway.

Will stumbles to the door, gripping it for balance. The rocking of the boat feels much more apparent, now that he’s up on his feet; it’s as though he can feel the fluid of his ears sloshing around and trying to find balance. The way his limbs tremble is sickening, heightening the queasiness of his stomach and the swimming of his head, but he pushes on, fumbling down the hallway of the boat to the next open door, pulling himself through and into the salty ocean air.

Blue water greets him when he steps onto the boat deck, stretching out in crystal waves as far as the eye can see. Usually, he isn’t one to care for a view, though something about the sea always lures him in with it’s cold, enchanting and unknown depths, hiding away treasures lost and monsters unseen. *A fitting environment for Hannibal.*

Warmth has already seeped into his bones, even from this brief period of time standing in the sun, the sea breeze stirring the hair on his arms and making it stand on end. He hobbles over to the railing on the boat, sitting down beside it and stretching himself out on the wooden deck. The sky is expansively blue here, nothing like the grey, snow-heavy skies of Wolf Trap or Baltimore and the sun sits skewed in the west. Will lies on his back and closes his eyes, sighing as the tension is eased from his body and he relaxes into the floor, heat and breeze pressing and stirring against his face.

The world turns lazy and sluggish around him, fading away with sleep.

“Will.” It’s the first thing he hears as he wakes, blearily opening his eyes to find Hannibal standing over him.

Will glances around. The sun has moved over more in the sky, meaning only an hour or so has passed. His skin feels hot and when he looks down, he sees the redness of it shining through his arm hair, painfully burnt amid the cuts.

“My apologies. I didn’t realise you’d fallen asleep,” Hannibal says. “I would’ve woken you sooner.”

“It’s fine,” Will says, rubbing his eyes and wincing at the dragging sensation of his cut, swollen cheek.

Hannibal kneels down beside Will and puts a hand on his back when he sits up. “Here, I’ll help you.”

“Thanks.” Will takes Hannibal’s hand and lets himself be pulled up.

Once he’s standing, he lets go of Hannibal’s hand and walks over to the door of the boat’s interior, vaguely aware of the rest of the boat sitting at the corners of his vision. It isn’t large, by any means, but his body is drained of energy and his eyes are heavy, so he decides he’ll look around another time.

The hallway is a little darker than the first time he walked through it and he notices now the skylight installed into it, the glass causing fractures and waves in the sunlight, marring the white paint of the wall. He passes a door on the left, revealing a tiny bathroom consisting of a shower, toilet and sink, then passes a door on his right, which isn’t open, but most likely a closet, due to the nature of it’s sliding doors. The last door (more of an alcove) he passes is on his left again, though this one is a little kitchenette, made up of only a stove, mini fridge, sink and countertop with clip-in drawers.

Unable to keep a smirk from twitching at his lips, Will thinks of how much Hannibal must hate this tiny boat. The departure it has from his old home is striking and Will finds that he doesn’t even have to search for the differences, that’s how small the place is.

The bedroom is at the very end of the hall - not off to a side, or tucked into a corner - dead centre in the wall, the door wide open and revealing the bed and table of medication within. Usually he wouldn’t have been so careless as to leave the lights on, but here he is, staring at the bed and the walls in the clarity of white light.

“What do you think of our boat?” Hannibal asks. There’s a lilt in the way he says ‘our’, a warm tone.

“It’s perfect,” Will says, knowing it will annoy the other man. He isn’t lying. The boat *is* perfect, in its own way, full of everything essential and without too much grandeur, other than the proud white paint and the paintings on the bedroom wall.

Hannibal, of course, doesn’t scoff at Will’s words and takes it in his stride. “I am glad it’s to your tastes. I did purchase it with you in mind.” ‘With you in mind,’ as if he knew all along that Will would go with him to Cuba.

Will nods and walks over to the bed, crawling in and sighing at the way it gives softly beneath his weight, the cool sheets soothing to his hot skin. He puts his head on the pillow and closes his eyes, chuckling when his stomach rumbles in response.

“I’ll fix you something to eat,” Hannibal says, leaving the room and stepping to the kitchenette.

Will watches through lazy, half-lidded eyes as Hannibal pulls a bowl from the fridge and tips its contents into a saucepan. He places it on the stove and lights a fire beneath it, stirring occasionally. He doesn't drug the food while it's in the stove, Will sees, but whether Hannibal drugged it when he'd first made it, Will has no way of knowing.

Cutlery is presented to Will along with the bowl and he listens vaguely as Hannibal lists the ingredients in it. The food's introduction seems a little shorter than usual, but Will doesn't question it, knowing it will only serve to upset Hannibal, something he can't be bothered dealing with in his weakened state. He smiles and thanks Hannibal, looking into the murky depths of the soup sitting in it. A ghost of pain flashes in his forehead, a whisper, disappearing as quickly as it came. It's enough to startle him.

There's no meat in it and it makes Will wonder why Hannibal is so eager to watch him eat, perched across the room and staring with eyes that are narrowed at the edges, brow creased with concentration as his pupils follow the movement of Will's hands. It makes him want to throw the bowl away, declare it unfit for consumption.

Fighting back drowsiness, he wonders what Hannibal has drugged him with. Not something strong, because he finishes his food and watches blankly as Hannibal sweeps the bowl and the cutlery from his lap, taking them to the kitchenette and washing them.

He hears the sound of water running, then hears nothing at all.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Gonna start adding song recs I think fit the relationship/chapter.

This one is 'Wicked Game' by Chris Isaak.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal sighs as he sits down in the empty chair by the medication table, watching Will as he slumbers. He's horribly damaged, the stab wound in his cheek a bright red, pulsing faintly as the blood runs through its swollen mass, pushing at the corner of Will's closed eye. As always, Will bears his damage with unearthly grace, not marred or ruined by it.

Touching him would be so easy in this moment, but Hannibal deprives himself of the pleasure, willing himself to be content with the feast of his eyes, not the pads of his fingers. Fragility speaks to him, calling from Will's shuddering chest, his bloodstained shirt obscuring the way his skin shifts over his broken ribs, gliding along the lumps and sliding through without any acknowledgement of pain.

Metal and acid hang in the air, the sharp stench of Will's blood. It's an intoxicating smell and Hannibal finds his relationship with it tumultuous. One moment, it drags him in, arouses him and makes him wants to sink his teeth into Will's flesh and rip until he can taste it, let it cloy his senses; yet other moments, he finds it is a stench that unlocks some primal urge within him to hunt and kill without thought or purpose, something he cannot and will not afford. To do so would be sloppy and to be sloppy with a victim was to be rude to them. Rudeness is ugly and their deaths are not only done to expose the rudeness, but to change it, to transcend it in death and try to make even the most hideous of humans beautiful in their own, grotesque way, even if it is only for once in their sorry existences. That is his design.

Redness shines in patches over Will's skin, looking hot and painful. Truthfully, Hannibal had meant to wake Will much earlier on the boat deck, but he'd been distracted when the boat grew off-course, forcing himself to fix that before he attended to Will. The more injured Will is, the more he owes Hannibal for healing him, anyway. Will owes him much already, but his life… Hannibal wonders what value Will gives his own life. Not much, he suspects.

Pushing them off the cliff was an interesting design, though Hannibal believes he has found its meaning and thinks its implications are impressive. He can hear Will whispering his design with each breath he takes, wordless and yet conveying the message in each sound. Hannibal has made the decision to wait for Will's confession. That's when he'll compare his observations with Will's truths, that acknowledgement that Hannibal doesn't dare voice

himself, aware of how desperate it would make him appear. Telling Will his own design would be wasteful.

They have been on the water for three days now and Will has slept for much of that time. Hannibal finds it regrettable he hasn't been able to watch Will more, but the ocean has been dragging them off-course very subtly, requiring Hannibal's frequent checking.

Will was hungry when he woke, something Hannibal isn't surprised about, eating the soup Hannibal gave him rather desperately, despite the bad memories it brought back, judging by the way he froze and blinked rapidly for a few moments when he realised what Hannibal had served him. A delicious reaction to see and truly a gift.

Usually with Will this far gone, Hannibal would take advantage and get him as weak as possible. This time around, it's more important to get him healed. He'll threaten to run, will think Hannibal is manipulating him (which he is, though not in the way Will probably suspects) and Hannibal is ready for that. He knows what to tell Will when he inevitably loses himself. He's done it before, innumerable times.

In the bed, Will twitches and rolls onto his back, arms jerking to cover his ribs in a protective stance. He's broken three of them, two on the left and one on the right. They're right over his heart and Hannibal finds the symbolism amusing - he has smashed through and climbed over the rubble of all of Will's barriers, even ripped some down with his bare hands and clawed away at the walls until his fingernails bled.

Will is the only person to make him bleed.

Hannibal stands and walks over to the light, switching it off and staring as Will suddenly disappears into blackness, only his blood-ridden scent filling the air like sweet spring blossoms. Nose tilted into the air and lips parted, Hannibal sifts through the air for his own smell, finding it lingering somewhere beneath Will's, though a little more pronounced than the smell of wood lacquer from the paintings on the wall. He follows the scent back to his chair and sits, patient as his eyes adjust to the dark.

After a few minutes, he can see Will's breathing form, the outline of his chest as it rises and falls, diaphragm contracting in turn with his lungs swelling. If Hannibal was in bed, he would put his hand out and rest it atop Will's beating heart. Instead, he stands and leaves the room, shutting the door behind him.

The boat is smaller than he'd like. Will noticed that before, smiling to himself when he thought Hannibal couldn't see. Originally, the boat was supposed to have a larger bathroom, a kitchen with a bigger stove and fridge, as well as a proper laundry room. They ended up with this small boat and a thousand dollar refund instead.

Hannibal kept the salesman's business card in the second drawer from the left in the laundry cupboard.

Salt is the first scent that makes itself known to Hannibal when he steps onto the boat deck, feeling the dullness of it seep into his tongue and throat. Sea breeze is an interesting smell, he finds, carrying lots of scents in its wake. People who have a weak sense of smell could only

describe the salt of the air. It's a valid thing to note, but Hannibal detects other scents: sand, earth, shellfish, warm sun-husk, many smaller things as well. He appreciates each, but his favourites are sand and sun-husk. Sand, because it smells a little like dirt and of foreign places, far from where the eye can see. It's as though smelling it is the only way to experience these unknown lands and Hannibal revels in the mystery of it all, finding the chaos of the swirling ocean depths fascinating, tantalising to his sensitive sinuses. Sun-husk is a smell he invented himself, as much an aroma as it is a feeling. It's the way he describes the smell of *warmth* when terms like "wet" or "cloying" just can't quite meet expectation. No, sun-husk smells like a stroll on the beach in the mid-morning, the time when the first biddings of the noon heat set in like the tide, sweeping into the air and setting further in each time, disappearing like a whisper on the wind when night falls and gives way to humid heat. Sun-husk is like flakes falling from the sky from where Apollo drives his sun chariot, spilling its exhaust over the world in negligence. It's the scent that comes to him when he lays eyes on Will standing in the light, even the cold, pale luminance of the moon.

The boat is drifting off course, but Hannibal corrects it. They have more than enough fuel, enough to last a week, maybe a week and a half, plenty of food, water, medication, gas for the stove and shower, as well as a few bags of ice.

Hannibal goes back into the boat's interior and to the bedroom at the end of the hallway, sitting beside the table of medication. The process is noiseless. Will stirs anyway, rolling over to face Hannibal, his breathing becoming quicker and lighter.

"Hannibal?" He says.

Hannibal blinks a few times, encouraging his eyes to adjust more to the darkness. "Yes, Will?"

"Can I have some water, please?" Will asks.

"Of course," Hannibal says.

He reaches to the table beside him, can make out the jug handle and a glass sitting beside it. Slowly, he puts his finger on the inside of the glass and lifts the jug, pouring the water into the glass until the water hits the tip of his finger, at which point he places the jug back and stands, carrying the glass over to Will. Cold hands enclose Hannibal's as Will feels around and grabs the glass from him.

Hannibal sits at the edge of the bed as Will sips his water.

"Thank you," Will says after a moment. He sounds so very lovely, using his manners.

"You're welcome," Hannibal responds.

“So,” Will begins, sitting the glass of water in his lap, “what happened after I pushed us off the cliff?”

“We fell,” Hannibal says, smiling at his little joke, even if Will can’t see.

Will chuckles softly. “Really? I didn't think that happened when people jumped from cliffs.”

“Most people don’t live to tell the tale,” Hannibal says.

“No,” Will says, sober. “They don’t.”

“Was that your intention?” Hannibal asks.

He can imagine Will’s lip swelling as he runs his tongue over his teeth in consideration. “I was letting God decide what will happen to us, I think.”

"God doesn't kill those who wish to die," Hannibal says, "it's all part of His game."

Will hums in agreement.

"What will you do, now that God has left us to live?" Hannibal asks.

Will considers. "You're asking me if I'm going to stay with you."

"Yes, in a way. I can't imagine you wish to return to the U.S. under the scrutiny of your colleagues and Freddie Lounds," Hannibal says.

"No, I don't really," Will says.

"So what will you do instead?" Hannibal asks.

"Stay," Will says, "I'll stay with you. Where else would I go?"

It's a rhetorical question, though Hannibal can't help it when a response comes to mind. As he parts his lips to voice it, Will's hands slip into his palms, fingers curling around him and holding him in silence.

"How long was I asleep?" Will asks.

"An hour and a half," Hannibal answers truthfully.

"Are you having dinner?" Will asks.

Hannibal smiles. Will must have been watching the sun when he was on the boat deck earlier. "Clever boy." He can feel heat worm its way into Will's hands at the compliment. "I wouldn't call it 'dinner', but yes, I will be eating. Are you still hungry?"

"I can help you with it," Will says.

"You would like to sous chef?" Hannibal asks. When Will hums in affirmation, he chuckles. "I'm not sure there will be anything for you to do, but your company will be appreciated regardless."

Hannibal waits for Will to let go of his hands before he pushes himself off the bed and turns the bedroom light on. Hands over his face, Will shudders in the light, resembling a biblical sinner cowering in the light of God. It's poetic; fitting for him. The lovely little lamb,

slaughtered by the belial beast inside him, left to roam in the wild with Hannibal as his guide along the winding stepping stones of evil.

Will stands slowly, groaning and breath catching as he moves, skin sliding over his ribs and rippling along. He passes Hannibal at the bedroom door, murmuring a 'thank you' and shuffling to the kitchenette.

Opening the fridge, Hannibal pulls out ingredients for a soup and puts them on the counter top, grabbing herbs and a pot from the drawers. Will's eyes follow his movements closely.

"Ensuring I don't drug your food?" Hannibal asks in a light voice.

"Being cautious," Will says, "which I think I've earnt the right to do."

"Certainly," Hannibal says.

Will is thinking of a scathing remark. Hannibal can see it in the way his lips kiss his teeth.

Will takes the knife Hannibal hands him and begins chopping the vegetables Hannibal has slid over. "I did seem to fall asleep suspiciously quickly, before."

"I was surprised too," Hannibal says. Everything he says to Will must be delivered in a steady tone - anything else and he compromises all his hard work. Emotional responses leave him vulnerable to Will's manipulation, something he has yet to see the limits of, though he is sure it is quite awful in its greatness, the dark recesses of Will's mind.

Those blue eyes of his are almost like windows, showing the dripping pools of nameless shadows that echo in his skull. A paceless, musical thrum, constant and unending, never increasing in volume but always running, unseen and ever present in every thought that pulses through. Beautiful in the way a chapel is, a great big building with stained-glass windows, housing inside the terrible beasts of God which beg for forgiveness of their ugly sins, crawling on their knees through the muck of their own filthy tears.

Hannibal wishes those cowardly beasts would instead walk to the altar and stand strong until it crumbled before them.

"If you're not drugging me now, Hannibal, what're you doing?" Will asks, staring at him. His nostrils are flared, pupils dilated, ready to run. The stench of fear rolls off him in waves, but he's no coward. He won't flee, no matter what.

"I'm taking care of you while you are unwell," Hannibal answers. He should've considered his words longer, he thinks as he watches Will deliberate.

"'Unwell', hey?" Will nods to himself, a humourless smirk tugging at his lips, despite the pain it's probably causing him. "And I suppose you're perfectly fine? You're not *injured,* are you? I mean, you're certainly not 'unwell'."

Silence seems the best response.

"I know your game, Hannibal. Quit playing it," Will snarls.

Hannibal doesn't bat an eyelid. "And what game would I be playing, dear Will?"

"If I told you I knew the rules, you'd change them on me," Will says, "hell, you probably already know what I know anyway."

“I have no wish to play games with you, Will. Not psychological ones, anyway. Perhaps a game of chess would be better suited as a way to pass the time?” Hannibal watches Will’s face, keeping his own neutral as he watches the emotions pass through. There’s annoyance, anger, contemplation, then nothing.

“Dad could only ever afford a cheap checkers board when I was younger,” Will says. “I don’t know how to play chess.”

Will is manipulating him. That much is obvious. He doesn’t offer information about his father even when he’s content, let alone when he’s trying to pick a fight. He must be feeling tired and sore at the moment, otherwise his work wouldn’t be so clear. This is a ruse, a bait for Hannibal to take. Perhaps Will wants him to ask questions about his past in exchange for information on their whereabouts or a list of Hannibal’s injuries.

“I’m sure you would pick up on the rules quite quickly,” Hannibal says, responding to Will’s statement without the offering of psycho-analysis. That’s implied.

Will shrugs. “Probably. You’d be a good teacher, wouldn’t you?”

“I like to think I would be,” Hannibal responds.

“You said the same thing about being a father,” Will says. A few months ago, and there would have been a viscous undertone to that statement, a scathing bite, seething on his tongue. Now, Will just sounds tired.

Setting the knife down on the bench, Will picks up the chopping board with unsteady hands and shakily holds it over the boiling pot on the stove, tipping the vegetables in. A few cling to the board, so Hannibal brushes them off with deft fingers.

Both men watch as the soup cooks, neither uttering a word. It’s an uncomfortable silence, the air between them sitting stiff, an electrical undercurrent prickling through and raising the hair along their limbs. Hannibal isn’t sure what to make of it. Will is disturbed, his profile looking jilted, jaw stuck out and nostrils flared.

When the soup finishes cooking, Hannibal takes it off the heat and serves it into two bowls. He makes sure Will can see the entire process. Cutlery is distributed between them and Hannibal lets Will enter the bedroom first, sitting at the medication table while Will claims the bed. Back straight, Hannibal places his soup on the table and sits, blowing into his bowl and scooping broth into his spoon, smelling it before he eats, allowing it to sit on his tongue. Will sits on the bed, cross-legged and with the bowl in his lap, scooping it quickly into his mouth and cursing under his breath at its heat.

Tension still hovers in the air, but Hannibal forces the stench of it away and focuses instead on the aroma of the soup, the pleasant mix of herbs and vegetables tantalising to his sinuses.

Each breath he takes fills his cheeks, extending all the way back to his ears and pressing against his brain, delicious and heady.

“It’s nice,” Will tells him midway through their meal.

What ‘nice’ means, Hannibal isn’t sure. Given Will’s bitey mood, he thinks it’s a question better asked later.

“Two chefs always prepare a much better meal than one,” is what he says instead.

They finish eating and Will stands, offering to take Hannibal’s bowl and wash it. Hannibal shakes his head and waves Will through the door to the hallway, helping him with the dishes and putting them away. Although he doesn’t explain the locations of anything to Will, he can see the other man taking a catalogue of each item, filing the locations away and nodding to himself in an absent manner.

Hannibal tells Will he is going to check on the course of the boat. All he receives is a nod in response, Will ducking into the bedroom and turning the light off, leaving Hannibal alone in the hallway. He fights the urge to peak into the room and watch Will prepare himself for bed.

Reviewing his compass and map, Hannibal decides the boat is on the correct course and heads back inside the boat’s interior, drifting into the bedroom. Each footfall is silent, every breath inaudible.

Once his eyes have adjusted to the dark, Hannibal sees the moving lump of Will’s body. He’s left enough room in the bed for Hannibal to climb in beside him, curled up near the wall and breathing deeply. He doesn’t react when Hannibal lays down beside him. Comfortable warmth settles between them.

Peace sits in Will’s features, his eyes resting against each other rather than pressed together, his lips parted only enough to see slithers of blackness within, his brow unfurrowed and unabraised. It’s wonderful, seeing him in such perfect clarity. The light isn’t on, of course, but Hannibal looks over Will’s other features as best he can, piecing details together from his memory and using them to enhance the image of Will, despite the cloying darkness that seeks to choke him.

Will is so beautiful in this state, Hannibal almost wishes he’d never wake. Perhaps he won’t, one day. Another day.

Until then, all Hannibal can do is watch in awe.

Chapter End Notes

It's weird as hell and I'm not sure if anyone else is like this, but... I genuinely hate Hannibal. So many times in the series, I was rooting for his capture/death and getting annoyed when he ran away.

At the same time, I love him with all my heart.

Guess Will Graham and I have something in common (other than our love of animals).

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A few more days pass. Hannibal spends most of that time correcting the boat and watching Will sleep. Despite their fight over the soup the other night, Will lets Hannibal make him meals without supervision, thanking him quietly and picking at his food for an hour. There's rarely a time where Will doesn't fall asleep mid-meal, slumped back in bed with the bowl in his lap and snoring softly. Hannibal takes the bowl and sometimes finishes the food, but more often throws it away.

The Cuban port sits in the distance, small and tucked away among the foliage that lines the ocean water. A white beach lies a short distance away, stretching out as far as the eye can see. Everything is still and quiet, just as Hannibal had wanted.

As they come into land, Cuban men run around and shout to each other, pulling ropes and hooks from their belts and preparing as the boat drifts in. Some call to Hannibal in broken English and he responds, flicking his hands in direction and nodding.

Once the boat is moored, Hannibal heads into the boat interior to find Will sitting up in the bed, sweating dripping from his forehead, shoulders and chest. It's soaked through his shirt and into the bed sheets, leaving behind dark stains. He must have woken from a nightmare, but he looks relaxed, his eyes heavy with sleep and his head limp against the wall behind him.

"We've landed in Cuba, Will," Hannibal says.

Will nods. "I heard."

Observant and clever, as usual. "Ah, before I forget: your new name is Adrian Taylor." Hannibal reaches into the back pocket of his pants, producing a passport and presenting it to Will.

"Adrian Taylor," Will murmurs to himself as he reads over the information inside the passport.

"I am now Mikelli Monvulto," Hannibal says.

Will wipes a hand through his sweat-soaked hair and tosses the passport aside, groaning as he stretches and clambers out of bed. He seems entirely unabashed with the way Hannibal watches him, drifting past him while scratching his shoulder and leaving the bedroom, the door of the bathroom opening and closing after a few seconds.

Scooping up the passport and leaving the bedroom, Hannibal runs through a mental list of all the things that must be done before him and Will leave the port.

Chiyoh would have already organised their home, all the furnishings and non-perishable foods sitting in the house and awaiting the arrival of its occupants. She also would have organised a cab to pick the men up from the port, perhaps even a buyer for their boat.

Hannibal grabs all the personal items from the boat, packing away the medicine in the bedroom and the sweaty bed sheets. Wheeling the suitcases behind him, he finds Will standing on the boat deck. He's gazing onto the water as if it's the last time he'll ever see it, trying to memorise the edges of each wave and the glint of them in the light.

"Our home is by the beach," Hannibal says. "You'll have all the time in the world to savour it there."

"Until we leave again," Will mutters, turning away from the water and shaking his head, ridding it of thoughts that Hannibal can't discern.

"If we're careful, that will be a long time in the future," Hannibal says.

Will laughs, bitter and empty. "If *you're* careful, you mean. You won't be able to resist the urge."

"And neither will you," Hannibal says.

Will's jaw juts out in defiance and he turns to face Hannibal, staring him down. "I'll do what I have to. Not what you tell me."

"I wouldn't have it any other way," Hannibal says.

Scoffing, Will shakes his head and walks off without a response. The moment he steps onto the deck, he is approached by a Cuban man carrying a clipboard and pen, who gives the two to Will and begins telling him something, pointing at the papers and miming writing. Will nods and scribbles on the papers, flicking through them and scanning.

Suitcases in hand, Hannibal steps onto the port and approaches Will, standing beside him. Looking over Will's shoulder to read the papers would be incredibly rude, so Hannibal waits patiently as Will finishes reading.

"That's the boat dealt with," Will mutters, flagging down the Cuban man from before and handing him back the clipboard.

The man comes back with a wad of cash and presses it into Will's hand, shaking the other and grinning. Will nods in polite response.

Wheeling the suitcases along, Hannibal flicks his head in gesture for Will to follow him. They walk along the port until they reach land. When Hannibal's feet touch the dirt, he becomes acutely aware of the way the ground sways beneath his feet, his legs missing the sensation of rocking along to the ocean waves. It will be much worse for Will, who is still reasonably unsteady from his injuries. While his legs are less battered and his ribs are bound well enough to not hurt too much when he moves, his arms are still raw and torn from the combination of sunburn and injury, his cheek swollen and purple in the light. What Chiyoh

told the portmen, Hannibal isn't sure, but it must have been something convincing, as they haven't been questioned or looked at strangely.

A cab that smells of cigarette smoke and cheap liquor is parked for them on the dirt road and Hannibal waits until the driver notices him and Will standing around, the man leaping out of the car and rushing to take Hannibal's bag while babbling apologies for making them wait so long. Hannibal shrugs away the urge to ask for the man's business card.

In the back seat of the car, Will struggles to do up his seatbelt, unable to reach it because of the pain and stiffness in his ribs. Hannibal offers to help and at that, Will shakes his head and slumps against the car window, wincing in pain.

He stays like that for the entire three-hour car trip, his body bouncing along in the car as they drive. Hannibal listens to the Cuban music on the radio, tapping a beat on his knee and nodding. Nobody speaks.

At the end of their trip, the driver climbs out of the car and pulls the suitcases from the trunk, handing them to Hannibal and bidding him goodbye. Will eases himself out and stands on stumbling feet, gazing up at the house. The sky has grown dark above them and as the cab driver departs, the red tail lights of the car glow and cast a crimson shine on the rocks of the road.

The house is large, the floor plan hidden away in the depths of Hannibal's memory palace. He calls it forward, observing the way it compares to the view of the house from the exterior, seeing the way the second storey is retracted from the first, comprising of what Hannibal knows to be a bathroom, two bedrooms (one with an en suite) and the upstairs level of a library, similar to his office back in Baltimore. The lower storey has the bottom level of the library, a separate study nook, a kitchen, a living room and a sun room. In the garden will be rows of dirt beds for growing vegetables and flowers, a shed and a small greenhouse.

Will takes a step toward the house, gravel crunching beneath his feet. He stops, clutching his ribs and wincing.

“Would you like my help?” Hannibal asks.

Will nods. “Please,” he manages to grit out.

Hannibal leaves the suitcases and walks over to Will, looping Will’s arms over his shoulders and pulling him in gently by the waist. Grunting, Will leans into him, breath stuttering as he works through his pain. They make their way to the front door of the house, Hannibal only letting go of Will for a moment as he searches for the keys Chiyoh left near the door. They’re in the flowerbed to the left, hidden in the dirt.

Inside the house, it smells of dust, sparse furniture sprinkled throughout the rooms. Only the bare minimum has been placed inside, as Hannibal told Chiyoh he would prefer to buy any furniture in-person rather than online or over the phone.

“I don’t think I’ll make it up the stairs,” Will says, staring at the grand stairway in the foyer, frowning at the fancy set of lights hanging above.

“Would you like me to carry you?” Hannibal asks.

Will stiffens beside him, breath hitching. “No.” Another pause. “Thank you.”

Hannibal stores that reaction away in his mind palace and moves on with the conversation, offering Will one of the sitting room couches.

Once Will is settled on a couch, Hannibal goes and grabs the suitcases from outside. As he comes back in, he locks the front door, makes sure the back door is locked as well and turns on the fan of the house, already feeling the oppressive heat and humidity of the air settling in for the night. A lovely breeze moves through the house when all the windows are ajar.

“It’s probably a good thing we didn’t go upstairs upon our arrival,” Hannibal tells Will, hunting through a linen closet that is connected to the living room in search of some blankets.

“Why?” Will asks. His voice is soft but alert, an edge to it ringing clear.

“I imagine it is even hotter upstairs than it is down here,” Hannibal says.

Will nods. “I guess. My attic was always warm, back in Wolf Trap. I just thought it was mostly because of the insulation.”

This poor, Southern boy, talking about his attic rather than ‘upstairs’ area. Hannibal wonders if before his home, Will had ever been in a two-storey house. Maybe there was a time he had wished for one of his own, had been jealous of all the other children who lived in one place their whole lives and seemed to have everything they could ever want, their own rooms and entertainment provided by doting parents. Hopefully, Will won’t mind Hannibal doting on him. There’s still so many things Hannibal wants to show him, after all, and it would be a shame to hold himself back.

“Many people don’t realise how warm an attic or upstairs area can be, compared to the rest of a home. Strange that architects always build bedrooms up there, rather than something like a kitchen or study.” Hannibal finds blankets at the bottom of the linen closet and pulls two out, handing one to Will and tossing the other on the spare couch.

“Maybe they’re just not as clever as you,” Will says, laying down on the couch. Neck kinked and feet hanging over the edge, he looks so uncomfortable that Hannibal almost wants to pick him up and carry him upstairs without permission, but he busies himself arranging his own blanket on his couch instead.

"Perhaps. Are you hungry?" Hannibal asks.

Will nods.

"I'll fix us something," Hannibal says, leaving Will in the sitting room and walking into the kitchen.

In the butler's pantry is a packet of spaghetti and a jar of pasta sauce. Tomorrow, Hannibal will go shopping for proper food, but for now he settles for the packaged things. He cooks

everything up and plates it (grimacing as he does so), delivering a plate to Will and settling on his own couch with his legs crossed. The cushions are a little hard beneath his legs; he'll have to buy new sofas as well tomorrow.

"Thanks, Hannibal," Will says, then makes no further comment, not even teasing Hannibal about the quality of their meal.

They eat in silence (though Hannibal is all too aware of Will's occasional slurp of spaghetti) and stare into empty space, neither of them present in the moment. Hannibal wonders what memories Will is visiting as they eat, curious as to whether he is thinking of the past times they've eaten together, or perhaps not thinking of Hannibal at all. The latter thought brings about a breath of despair.

Will murmurs a 'thanks' when Hannibal takes his dirty plate and cutlery. He's already asleep by the time Hannibal has washed the dishes and come to resettle on the couch, sitting and curling in the corner of it with a perfect view of Will.

Exploring the house crosses Hannibal's mind, but he decides it can be done another time and closes his eyes, drifting off to sleep to the sound of Will's soft breathing.

There is a black void all around him. It's warm and comforting, the darkness, the smell of olives and river water hanging in the air. He follows the scent where it's strongest, his nose guiding him through as he wanders. His footfalls make no sound. Neither does his breath, or his clothes - not that he's sure he *is* clothed - the air completely silent around him.

It's lovely. A cocoon, of sorts. How he will emerge when he reaches the end of his journey, he isn't sure.

Walking along, he finally sees a light shining in the distance. Pins and needles prickle his skin at the sight, but he can't stop walking, his feet moving of their own accord. The light disappears. Comfort sets back in.

The light comes again a while later. This time it's closer, brighter, more unnerving. Still, Hannibal walks closer to it, drawn like a moth to the flame, unable to tear his eyes away, incapable of blinking even when his eyes begin to ache. Again, the light vanishes.

For the third time, the light appears, this time with a vague dark shape hidden within it. Hannibal drifts closer and comes to realise the shape is humanoid, masculine in form. It leaves no trace when it goes again.

It appears once more, standing a few metres in front of Hannibal. The light emitted from it is blinding at first, but Hannibal's eyes adjust and soon, he can see the clothes of the being before him.

The man wears a white chiton and sandals, like a Greek of old, a gold pin holding the chiton to his shoulder. On his exposed shoulder, a puckered bullet scar sits. Hannibal's gaze drifts further up to the man's face and he realises that it's Will he's looking at. The fair creature

before him, with his curly head and large blue eyes; it's Will, an olive wreath crowned upon his skull and an olive branch in his hand, hanging by his side. He stares at Hannibal and his lips part slightly, as if to say something. He disappears again.

Hannibal wakes to Will climbing onto the couch and settling in against his open chest. His skin is cold to touch. Aware of Will's injuries, Hannibal keeps his arms away, refraining from wrapping them around Will's waist and pulling him in closer.

Will's hair smells of oil and salt. Another thing to add to the list tomorrow: finding a way to get Will a proper shower, rather than a wipe-down like they've done for the last few weeks.

Breathing deeply, Will falls asleep, his body becoming limp against Hannibal's and his head sagging. Gentle and careful, Hannibal tilts Will's head up and back against his shoulder, unable to resist the urge to press a soft kiss to the back of Will's head and feel the curve of his curls against his nose for a moment.

Rather than fall asleep again, Hannibal opts to stay awake and continue stroking Will's hair, bathing in the warmth that has settled between them.

Chapter End Notes

No thoughts, head empty.

Sorry if this chapter is shit, stuff at school is heating up at the moment.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Water drips somewhere near Will, running in a constant stream. Wet and cold pulses around his calves, frigid, bitter and startling. The drip of the water becomes a rush, a wave of liquid that rises rapidly and comes to a stop at his knees, but continues rushing by him and stretches out in front. Trees and bushes appear in the setting, lining along the river bank.

He’s standing in his fishing gear: the jacket, hat and pants. He tugs the cap down further on his head, squashing the curls beneath. Gripping his fishing rod tightly between his fingers and loosening his wrists, he flicks the rod and casts the line, watching as the bait sails through the air and plunges into the dark water ahead. Relaxing, he rolls back onto the heels of his feet and slouches slightly, setting in and waiting for a tug at the hook.

It’s quick, the way the line shakes. At first, he dismisses it as a pebble knocking the hook and skewing it, but the tremoring persists, turning into persistent tugging. He reels the line in, his vision turning foggy as he does so, not allowing him to see what he’s caught. Each whir of the rod, each slow wind of it, each tug on the hook; it makes his skin crawl, like a million insects have infested his flesh, lurking invisible beneath the surface and wandering where they please. He can’t stop himself from reeling.

After one final tug, the line comes through easily. Will knows it’s broken the water and a dark haze pulses in his temples as his vision clears.

Dangling in front of his face is a fish unlike any other he’s ever seen before. It’s large, much too heavy to be held up by the rod, yet Will and the line bear the weight with a seemingly practiced ease. Rather than scales, the fish is made of flesh, webbed and cut to appear like scales, all the blood and gore clinging between the ridges.

Unable to restrain himself, Will reaches out and touches the fish, sticking his finger in between the shingles of the scales and feeling the ragged, fleshy flaps, pinching them between his finger and pulling. To his horrified fascination, the skin tears, coming loose from the fish and sitting limp against the pads of his fingertips. From out of the gap the missing scale has left, blood begins to spill, running in a rivulet down the side of the fish and gathering at its tail, dripping into the water below and making splashes of red.

Frozen, he stares as the fish flails on the hook, its grey eyes sliding back and forth. Suddenly, it stills.

Seconds stretch like hours until the fish's mouth opens wider and wider, its lips pulling back to its gills and creating a slit along its gaping mouth. Will can see the hook buried away in the roof of the fish's mouth, but its teeth disturb him more; they're human, much too large and straight, loose in a malicious grin. One eye at the side of the fish's skull rolls to make direct contact with Will's, staring straight into his skull and watching his brain pulse away inside.

It makes him feel like Hannibal's watching him.

The fish gives one final flail and goes still, its eyes clouding over and its scales closing back over its teeth. Everything fades.

Warmth is engulfing him when he wakes in the quiet of the early, pre-dawn morning. For a moment, he can imagine he's back home with Molly, curled up against her chest and feeling her breathe; only he's destroyed that old life, so there's no way that's possible.

Blinking the sleep from his eyes, he paws at his face and feels the fresh nips of pain in his cheek, as well as the dampness of his skin. His head is tilted upward and he moves it, feeling its heavy weight drag and fall until the bones and cartilage in his neck pop, the tension fading until it dissipates to nothing. Sighing, he shifts his head from side to side, getting used to the weight of it.

Against his left side is a long leg, propped up by his body and the couch cushions. On his right side is open space, the edge of the couch revealing another leg that trails along on the floor, foot placed flat on the wood.

During the night he'd woken and come to rest with Hannibal, he recalls. He'd had a dream of killing the Red Dragon and his sleepy brain could only produce a yearn for comfort, a need to be pressed against Hannibal and feel him exist. He isn't sure how he should feel about it, doesn't even know if it really matters, in the grand scheme of things. No matter what he decides he thinks, whether he's offended or content, he knows that his natural instinct is to come back to Hannibal and draw strength from him.

There's some psycho-analysing to be done there. Hannibal will provide that over breakfast.

"You're awake rather early," Hannibal murmurs, his breath stirring Will's hair.

Will doesn't answer. He knows Hannibal has been enjoying the close contact like a man starved. What he *doesn't* know is how he's supposed to feel about that knowledge. So badly that it hurts, he wants to give in to Hannibal, let himself be loved by this monster of a man, yet he fears it as well, afraid to discover what he has Become.

"What woke you?" Hannibal asks.

"A dream," Will says. He leaves it at that.

Hannibal hums. "Not a particularly pleasant one, then, I imagine."

"Are they ever?" Will scoffs.

"The dreams that you experience and disregard, others may derive happiness in," Hannibal says, "I cannot say that the thoughts I find pleasant are the same as yours."

"You can say that again," Will says drily.

Hannibal lifts one of his hands out of Will's sight, the sound indicating that he's fixing his hair. "Tell me, Will: do you often dream of home?"

"Not often," Will says. "More… infrequent."

"Dreaming of home is often a pleasurable, comforting thing," Hannibal says, "though I suspect you don't make such associations. I am curious as to who you see living in your home."

You can stay curious, is what Will wants to say. He doesn't.

"It depends on the house," he begins. Hannibal is silent, so he continues. "In Wolf Trap, I see the dogs. Sometimes there's this scenario where my dad comes to visit and we sit around, shoot the shit over a beer. Alana pops up occasionally. The before-you Alana, anyway. Other times, I dream I'm in your house or Abigail's, sitting with the two of you in silence. Jack usually interrupts, and that wakes me up."

"And your home with Molly?" Hannibal asks.

Will has to draw a line here. "I'm not discussing Molly with you, Hannibal."

"Very well," Hannibal says, cordial and non-conflicted as always.

It's not that Will doesn't *want* to tell him about Molly. More than anything, he wants to describe her to Hannibal, wants to tell him how she was kind to him, how she loved him, how she would do whatever she could to make him comfortable. He wants to tell Hannibal about all those nights where he'd hold her so tight he didn't think he could ever let go, all those times where he'd curl into her chest and stomach and beg the demons in his head to let him stay with her just a little longer.

Their relationship was only on borrowed time, after all. Fleeting, temporary, gone in an instant.

He doesn't tell Hannibal about Molly because he knows he'd only be doing it to be hurtful. Part of him is still hesitant to push at Hannibal's buttons, to test the boundaries of Hannibal's acceptance. *We're both scared of what we'll do to each other.*

Hannibal's fear is so much different to everyone else's, composed almost entirely of poison; acidic and bitter in its oppressive waves. Will's own fear is like the sweating of a cold body, clammy and smothering, the blood running hot while the skin freezes, the bitter air nipping at the wet exposure, seeping into raised hair. He didn't feel it before, curled against Hannibal's chest, but now that they're speaking, he can feel his throat closing in and his neck sweating.

"We should have breakfast," Hannibal says, interrupting his thoughts, "I will go and see what other food Chiyoh has left us."

Will nods and leans forward, peeling away from Hannibal's chest and stomach. The hot air presses into his back immediately, announcing the wet patch of sweat that had grown overnight. He winces at the thought of Hannibal being covered in his sweat and is only

slightly disgusted when thoughts of Hannibal's probable enjoyment come to mind. There would be something appealing in Will's fear. In fact, Hannibal will be so distracted revelling in the scent and feel of it, he won't even give a thought as to the fact that it's him that inspires such feelings. Hope for that outcome is all Will has. Philosophical conversations are much too difficult with a brain that's as addled by pain as Will's is at the moment.

As Hannibal draws his leg away from Will's side and swings it over the edge of the couch to stand, Will realises that Hannibal hadn't taken advantage of his sleeping state - not noticeably, anyway. He'd definitely done *something* (not that Will could find it in himself to be angry about it), but overall he'd respected the invisible boundary between them. It's a set-up for further manipulation, Will's sure, but he lets himself enjoy the thought while he can.

The bindings of his ribs are starting to come undone, he notices as he looks over himself. *Hannibal will have to redo them later.* Blood has leaked from the injury on his cheek, as well as some fluid that sticks to his fingers when he brushes it away, clear and slightly yellowed, like liquid gel. It has a name he can't recall, something like serogaineous or serogeneraneous. Long and complicated, put simply, the kind of thing that only someone as pretentious as Hannibal could remember, or a forensic scientist studying wounds on a victim.

Curious, he unwinds the bandages from around his legs, looking at the tender, ripped and discoloured flesh. As he squints to make out details, he can feel just how badly the loss of his glasses is beginning to get to him, the furrow of his eyebrow as he concentrates on trying to see properly making his head ache in a steady thrum, like his brain is continuously swelling to the edges of his skull, pressing against the sides and contracting again.

His legs appear to have healed themselves well, the loose and pigmentless pieces of flesh simply dead and in need of careful peeling. Asking Hannibal to take him to the beach and using the salt water and sand to help scrub off seems the best idea, but he isn't sure he's comfortable with asking Hannibal for things yet.

Their relationship seems like it's only built for them to hurt each other, after all.

Hannibal seems to come back from the kitchen much too quickly, bowls in hand and spoons hooked under one of his slender fingers. An almost imperceivable frown pulls at his lips. When he presents a bowl to Will, it becomes obvious as to why.

Their breakfast is like something Will would have had back home on those rare occasions he remembered to eat in the morning, made of only milk and muesli. Dried fruit, oats and scraps of bran are inside, bland in appearance and certainly lacking Hannibal's usual grandeur. When he settles on the couch and scoops up a spoonful, he finds that he can identify the whole milk in it. Judging by Hannibal's disgusted look, there's more flavours in it, but Will can't go beyond the simplicity of identifying whole milk as sweet and skim milk as… however one described skim milk. He has never paid attention to sensory language like that. Not the way Hannibal does.

"I must apologise for this atrocious food," Hannibal says, "I will go shopping today, if I am able."

Will hides his smirk by having another mouthful of muesli. “It’s fine. I like it.” And he really does. Nothing suggests excessive effort in the meal, and watching Hannibal eat it makes him look almost human.

“How are you feeling?” Hannibal asks when they’ve both finished eating.

“Okay, I guess,” Will says, “I did get stabbed in the face, you know.”

Hannibal smiles at that, but sobers quickly. “I hope I’ve done well to take care of it.”

“It feels fine,” Will says.

“You’re past the stage of infection, at least. We can only hope you don’t undergo any stress or activity that may reopen the wound,” Hannibal says. “I will need to check it today and take the stitches out. I’ve kept them in a little longer to be cautious, but they must come out before the wound becomes too healed, otherwise...”

As he speaks, Will realises something that seems like it changes everything: Hannibal is rambling. He’s flustered, listing off things and saying words he doesn’t need to in an effort to distract himself, almost as if he isn’t even talking to Will as he does so. Slight tremors go through Hannibal’s hands - imperceivable to anyone who isn’t Will - and they run up along his arms, drawing up the tension in the muscles of his neck, tight and wound around his throat.

“I’m planning on getting furniture tomorrow,” Hannibal says, “perhaps even today, if time allows it. These sofas are rather uncomfortable - wouldn’t you agree?”

“They’re fine,” Will says. It doesn’t really matter. His body hurts either way.

Hannibal is sitting on the other couch.

That realisation comes like a bus has hit him. Hannibal is sitting on the other couch, giving Will space to sit alone. He isn’t even sitting as close as he can, either, having parked himself right in the middle of the sofa and crossed his legs, making it clear he has no intentions of moving.

Is this real, or just another game?

“Would you like to help me pick furniture?” Hannibal asks. “I’m sure I could grab some catalogues that we can look through together, if you’d like.”

“I don’t trust you,” Will says without thinking, unable to stop himself.

“I know.” Hannibal holds his eyes. “I’m trying to change that.”

They’re both silent, contemplating those words.

Then: “Even if I don’t deserve it.”

“No,” Will says as anger seethes and spikes, cold beneath his skin, “you don’t.” *He isn’t going to fix this with a goddamn apology and some shopping.*

Eyebrows and lips flickering into a frown, Hannibal stares at Will. Ignoring the hurt gaze, Will half-stomps past Hannibal and in the direction of what he thinks is the kitchen, planning to take his bowl in and wash it, then figure out where he can slink off to so that he can sulk - away from the prying eyes of Hannibal, of course.

The kitchen is easy to find due to its large size, taking up a reasonable amount of space with its double-door fridge, huge stove, counter space, kitchen island, butler’s pantry and two sinks.

It’s eerily reminiscent of Hannibal’s old kitchen.

Hannibal doesn’t come into the kitchen (which is infuriatingly thoughtful of him), but whether he’s still in the lounge room or not is a mystery to Will. It’s one he doesn’t plan on solving.

Setting the bowl on the metal drying rack by the sink, Will leaves the kitchen through the second doorway that lies to the left of the one he originally came through. A short hallway opens into the foyer of the house, the ceiling gilded with a chandelier that’s so ridiculous Will wants to laugh. He doesn’t, opting to shake his head and ignore it as he climbs the stairs.

Pain shudders through his body at each step up, but he pushes through it, taking his time. At the top of the stairs, he stops, chest heaving in an effort to catch his breath and recuperate as his ribs shoot pain like bullets through his body.

Another hallway sits in front of him, though this one is longer than the one downstairs. Two doors sit on the left side and one on the right. The right side door is closer, so Will grips the handle and pushes it open, stumbling through and shutting it behind him.

The room is huge, almost bigger than his entire lounge-bedroom combination back in Wolf Trap. With only a bed and bedside tables, the room feels empty. He wonders if perhaps this room was supposed to be Hannibal’s, if the other room is much smaller and more suited to his own tastes. Something tells him that isn’t the case, so he walks through and opens a door to the right, finding an en suite inside.

He’s never had an en suite before and had barely been inside any (even in his time working for law enforcement) but he’s seen enough to know that this one is larger than usual. It’s decked out fully with a double vanity and a bath that’s separate from the shower. A marble bench lines the wall at the entrance of the shower and he wonders briefly what it’s for, shaking away thoughts of sex and settling for the much more offensive: *rich assholes can’t even bother themselves with standing.* Hannibal would find that thought offensive, anyway. Either that or he’d make some flirtatious remark about the bench being comfortable to sit on.

Looking up, Will notices the two matching showerheads in the ceiling. Despite growing up poor, he knows exactly what it means and it makes him wonder if Hannibal knows about the double-showerhead, if he maybe planned it to be this way. Perhaps when he bought the

house, he thought he would be bringing someone back here with him. *Was he thinking of me?*

All the *doubles* in the house are overwhelming. It's a house built for two, made for two, designed for two and Hannibal has done that intentionally, he's brought Will here to force him into something he isn't entirely sure of and coerce him into *Becoming.* All of these things he's doing, sitting on that *second* couch, being considerate of Will's words, seemingly respecting his boundaries; it's all a game. They're going to destroy each other all over again.

Slamming the bathroom door shut behind him, Will fights the tightness of his chest and staggers over to the queen-sized bed, yanking the duvet off to drag it to one of the empty corners of the room. Shuddering, he collapses against the wall and curls into a ball, pulling the duvet tight around him as he grits through the pain and closes his eyes, willing the world to go silent and the rushing blood in his ears to go still.

Everything is too much and he just isn't enough. He's never been enough. He's spent his whole life filling his head with the personalities of every other person around him, letting their thoughts be the only ones bouncing around in his head even when they seek to destroy him.

"You're destructive," Chiyoh had hissed at him. She'd been right. He'd slipped into her mind when she said it, felt the cold truth of the words sitting in her skull, slicing through her lips and piercing him through the heart. Hearing it hurt, but her kissing him had been more painful, because she'd sent him a message that was so *goddamn clear,* so comprehensive and logical that it demolished everything in him and left him with only one thought: *I should be in love with him.*

Now, after all this time, he *is* in love with Hannibal. Hopelessly. Endlessly. Illogically.

All he wants to do is scream. He hasn't been breathing enough for that, so he chokes in an exhale and holds it, blinking away the tears caught in the edges of his eyes. Gripping the duvet tight in his arms, he balls himself up tighter and stares at the bed a few metres from him, letting the sheer size of it send him into a seething pit of detestment - anything to rid him of all this pain, even if it's anger.

An urge to grab a knife from the kitchen and bring it back to the bedroom overwhelms him. To plunge the knife into the mattress, to drag it down and slice the thing open from bottom to top, to reach in and tear out the stuffing inside and plunge his whole being into it-

It wouldn't satisfy him the way the Red Dragon did. It wouldn't compare to shooting Garrett Jacob-Hobbs or slaughtering Randall Tier. It would mean nothing and everything, to rip apart this new life Hannibal has given him, to betray him once again and risk finally never being forgiven.

After one last hiccup, the last trace of his breakdown, he slumps against the wall behind him and lets himself fall into silence, floating on his hollow, thoughtless thoughts, blissfully unaware of his own existence.

Chapter End Notes

WowIE that was heavy. Sorry everyone.

My apologies for tricking you all with cuddles at the start, that was very mean of me and I'm very sorry. Also the fish with the teeth... you guys didn't deserve that imagery.

Too bad it only gets worse from here!

I'm kidding. Sort of. You'll see what I mean soon.

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